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We are urged to subject ourselves to periodic physical examinations.

Yet it is quite as important to keep our minds in good condition as our houses, our consciences or our bodies. Error is as contagious as disease. A false belief may make more trouble in the world than a wrong intention.

Vacation is a good time to overhaul your brain from the frontal lobe to the cerebellum. Review your axioms, revise your postulates, and reconsider the unexpressed minor premises of your habitual forms of logic. All your reasoning, however correct, all your knowledge, however great, may be vitiated by some fundamental fallacy, carelessly adopted and uncritically retained. Get a lamp and peer into all the dark corners of your mind. No doubt, you keep the halls and reception rooms that are exposed in conversation to your friends in fairly decent and creditable order. But how would you like to let them look into your cerebral garret and subliminal cellar, where the toys of childhood and the prejudices you inherited from your ancestors mold and rot?

Hunt out and destroy with great care every old rag of superstition, for these are liable at any time to start that spontaneous combustion of ideas we call fanaticism against which there is no insurance. The bigger the brain the more dangerous such things are, for they have the more fuel. A little decaying superstition in the mind of a great man has been known to conflagrate a nation.

Errors breed errors. They multiply like microbes, especially through neglect. A single false belief may infect all the sound facts you pile in on top of it. Better an empty room than a rubbish heap. In the words of our American philosopher, Josh Billings, "it is better not to know so many things than to know so many things that are not so."

Go systematically through your intellectual equipment and see wherein it is deficient. Add annuals to your mental cyclopedia. Pick up each one of the sciences where you left off at school and bring it down to date. Look over the fields of art and literature to see what you have missed or misconceived. Don't let your sociology get too far behind the age. See that your philosophy and psychology bear the same date as the calendar. Examine your religious creed in the light of modern knowledge to see if it needs revision. Take down the atlas and consider how long it has been since you heard from each country. Visit the planets in turn. Take another view of ancient history through the telescope provided by modern scholarship.

This inspection of one's stock of ideas is necessary because they do not keep as if they were in cold storage. They do not remain unchanged when stored away and neglected. There is a lot of thinking going on in our brains that we do not know anything about. Ideas are apt to sprout or spoil, like potatoes in a cellar. Facts will ferment from yeasty thoughts until they intoxicate the brain. Falsehoods generate ptomaines, poisoning the mind and producing inexplicable disease and death. You can not be too careful. Clean out your mind at least once a year.

SCIENTIFIC ITEMS

WE record with regret the death of Alexander Graham Bell; of Simon Nelson Patten, long professor of political economy in the University of Pennsylvania; of Jokichi Takamine, the industrial research chemist; of Jacobus Cornelius Kapteyn, professor of astronomy at Groningen; of Wilhelm Wislicenus, director of the chemical laboratory at Tübingen; and of Jacques Bertillon, the French statistician.